# PPG Realizes Easy Remote Workforce Transition with Pulse Connect Secure VPN

As a large global manufacturer of paints and coatings, PPG is committed to protecting and beautifying the world. PPG's employees were hampered by an unreliable remote access solution. The onset of COVID-19 required vast numbers of their 47,000 employees to work remotely, yet a timely switchover to Pulse's VPN solution enabled high availability, simple updates, and faster access to applications and resources.
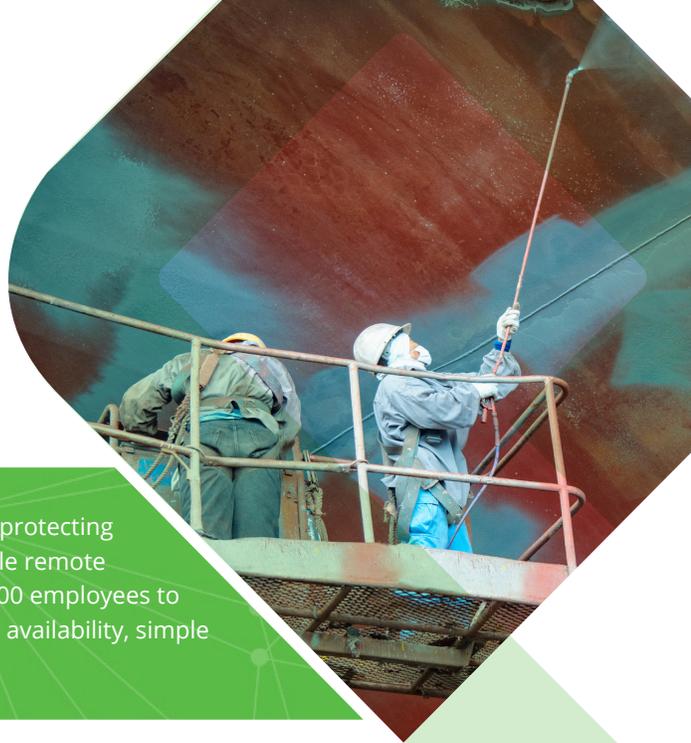
Executive Summary

▶ **Company**
- PPG

▶ **Industry**
- Chemical manufacturing

▶ **Technology Challenges**
- Issues with prior remote access solutions hindered remote user productivity and burdened IT support desks with calls
- Policy updates were difficult, often crashing servers
- Inordinate of IT time (≈15%) spent setting up and managing network changes

▶ **Solution**
- Pulse Connect Secure VPN
- (7) PSA 7000s distributed globally

▶ **Results**
- Broad application support and split-tunneling feature delivers greater user satisfaction and performance
- Always-on VPN, stateful endpoint security posture checking and configuration lockdown capabilities ensures endpoints are secure and within policy, independent of user activity
- Multi-region support and centralized management enables seamless updates and uniform policy control with no impact on users
- Pulse Secure VPN solutions drastically reduced support calls and provided easier troubleshooting for IT teams

Challenge

For the previous five years, PPG had been using an enterprise remote access technology for enabling automated, secure workstation connectivity. The company experienced a number of problems and critical events with the solution that hindered its workforce and took up significant amounts of support desk time.

The technology lacked true multi-region support, making it difficult for IT teams to more easily and centrally manage policies and perform updates without affecting the whole user base. In several instances, as local policies were changed, the global policy corrupted, stranding the full user base and forcing some users to recover connectivity – in some cases by mailing in their laptops or visiting an office. The solution also lacked the ability to connect to network devices by IP address, instead requiring fully-qualified domain names, making IT tasks and troubleshooting difficult.

From the perspective of day-to-day users, the existing solution presented challenges such as providing endpoint visibility, policy management, and comprehensive reporting or usable metric data. Additionally, it was slow to connect to a variety of hybrid IT applications and resources.

Furthermore, the prior solution's split tunnel feature capability lacked support for numerous applications, forcing users into a full tunnel, sometimes slowing down communications, and often limiting their access to content. Additionally, hotspot users routinely waited more than five minutes to establish a connection. Even then, if the connection was unsuccessful, there was no notification to the user, making troubleshooting difficult.

Problems with remote access were so prevalent across regions and countries that they represented the number one topic of tickets received by PPG's 40-person team at its world-class global service desk headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

≈ Pulse Secure®

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"But the Pulse Secure approach was clearly superior. We enabled it and eventually moved to it for production, and those help desk calls have largely gone away. We don't have the persistent issues that we've seen before with some of the other solutions. We've been running successfully since the end of 2018."

- Dan Connelly, IT Infrastructure Manager at PPG

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Solution

PPG's IT team was already familiar with Pulse Secure through a limited implementation of an older Juniper VPN they had been using as a complement to their remote access technology. In fact, Pulse Secure's platform had been helping the team resolve many of the remote access problems they were encountering.

In late 2019, PPG completed a global switchover to Pulse Connect Secure VPN. In each of their seven data centers they installed a PSA 7000 appliance, each of which can support upwards of 25,000 users. Though the company had around 40,000 users, with up to 30,000 users working remotely, the IT team wanted to ensure plenty of extra capacity was available to scale when needed.

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The investment in Pulse Connect Secure extra capacity proved to be the right decision when, just a few months later, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the rest of PPG's personnel into working from home. Many of these new remote workers would need to have access as if they were on-premise and to legacy applications, not just to web-based applications.

"When COVID came, we were already ramped up and ready to go," Connelly says. The company only needed to purchase additional user licensing to fully leverage the capacity that the PSA 7000 appliances enabled, which could be centrally and locally managed by PPG's IT staff.

Benefits

The wide spectrum of PPG users now enjoy easier, faster connections and uninterrupted availability wherever they are, which adds up to greater productivity. Connelly says the change has been significant, especially proven during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The two big key drivers that fundamentally changed things for us are having an always-on VPN that really works, and taking advantage of split tunnel secure connections," he adds.

Pulse's split tunneling feature ensures cloud access to establish a secure tunnel to send control data from the endpoint to the VPN server behind the network perimeter and provide a separate secure tunnel to exchange data directly between the endpoint and the cloud application. With Pulse Connect Secure, employees' connections are always protected, with no need to log in or out of each remote access session.

Workstations are able to receive access policy updates anytime. If a user is locked out of their workstation, IT can unlock them remotely. Administrators have access to workstations 24/7 and have broad, real-time access visibility of users and devices including means to review logs and receive diagnostics.

Pulse's split tunnel and multi-tunneling features means that users can easily and simultaneously connect to data center and web-based services they want in their home, minimizing corporate bandwidth usage and ensuring the security of their endpoint and connections. More importantly, PPG's users have yet to encounter an application that doesn't work with Pulse Secure's always-on and Pulse's split tunnel VPN connectivity.

PPG's IT teams have also benefited from the new secure access solution scale-out. Management is significantly easier, supporting centralized and local administration of appliances and policies. Additionally, access-related support calls have been drastically reduced, leaving teams with more time to focus on other tasks.

Performing updates is also much simpler and more efficient. Connelly estimates that 15 percent of IT teams' time had previously been spent setting up changes, resolving them, and verifying that nothing was broken; with Pulse, changes happen seamlessly with immediate verification.

Pulse Connect Secure also provides multi-region support, so IT can make changes and updates without affecting users, according to Connelly who noted the following: "We can bring a region up, or we can bring a region down. At the height of COVID crisis, if we had to do updates in one data center, we would just fail over the user traffic to another data center overnight. Users never knew maintenance was happening."

Connelly expects that post-COVID, with smooth VPN accessibility enabling greater productivity and a better user experience, more employees will work remotely more often. He anticipates being able to support greater workplace flexibility. "The secure access solution" he says, "not only has name brand recognition among employees but also management. It has provided us significant business continuity and offers flexibility to address future business requirements."

"Pulse Secure now has awareness from the highest levels within our company," Connelly says. "It was part of our success story for COVID, and it's becoming part of the secure access success story after COVID too."

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Pulse Secure, LLC offers software-defined Secure Access solutions that provide visibility and easy, protected connectivity between users, devices, things and services. The company delivers suites and a SaaS platform that uniquely integrate cloud, mobile, application and network access control for hybrid IT. More than 24,000 enterprises and service providers across every vertical rely on Pulse Secure to empower their mobile workforce to securely access applications and information in the data center and cloud while ensuring business compliance. Learn more at www.pulsesecure.net.

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